

# **Mental Retardation**

## **What is Mental Retardation?**

According to the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) § 15-761 (13), " 'Mental retardation' means a significant impairment of general intellectual functioning that exists concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and that adversely affects the child's performance in the educational environment."

" 'Mild mental retardation' means performance on standard measures of intellectual and adaptive behavior between two and three standard deviations below the mean for children of the same age." [ARS § 15-761(14)]

" 'Moderate mental retardation' means performance on standard measures of intellectual and adaptive behavior between three and four standard deviations below the mean for children of the same age." [ARS § 15-761(15)]

" 'Severe mental retardation' means performance on standard measures of intellectual and adaptive behavior measures at least four standard deviations below the mean for children of the same age." [ARS § 15-761(30)]

## **How Common is Mental Retardation?**

Mental retardation is a developmental disability that usually occurs at, or near birth. Many children with mental retardation have genetic abnormalities. Other causes include, but are not limited to, infections during pregnancy, infectious illness in infancy, abnormal delivery, prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol, lack of mental stimulation, and various medical conditions. According to The Arc of America, one out of ten American families is directly affected by mental retardation.

In the 2000-01 school year, 7,449 Arizona students were classified as having mental retardation and received special education services. This number represents 0.83 percent of the 893,334 children enrolled in Arizona public schools as of October 1, 2000.

## **What Effect Does Mental Retardation Have on a Child?**

Individuals with mental retardation develop social, emotional, academic and physical skills more slowly. Many are mildly or moderately disabled.

Educational services that begin in infancy, continue through preschool years and beyond, give children with mental retardation the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential. An appropriate instructional program includes approaches and materials that are interesting, age-appropriate and meaningful to the student. The curriculum should be structured in small blocks of time with frequent review and feedback to make sure that the student can apply the knowledge to tasks inside and outside of the classroom.

An important part of the comprehensive evaluation process is consideration of Assistive Technology (AT) services. Use of low-technology devices such as page magnifiers or high-technology items such as taped textbooks have proven successful.

Individuals with developmental disabilities benefit from opportunities to be included in activities in their home, school, and community. Lifelong services and support systems that include education, vocational preparation, health services, residential alternatives, and recreational opportunities, should be available for persons with disabilities and their families.

## **References**

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. (2000). *General information about*

*mental retardation, fact sheet # 8*, Washington, DC: NICHCY.

### **Resources Books for Adults**

Batshaw, M.D., M. (1998). *Your child has a disability: A complete sourcebook of daily and medical care*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Meyer, D. (1995). *Uncommon fathers: Reflections on raising a child with a disability*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

Miller, N. (1999). *Everybody's different: Understanding and changing our reactions to disabilities*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Naseef, R., (2001) *Special Children, Challenged Parents: The struggles and rewards of raising a child with a disability*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Wehmeyer & Patton, Eds. (2000) *Mental retardation in the 21st century*. Oradell, N.J.: Exceptional Parent.

### **Books for Children**

Stuve-Bodeen, S. (1998). *We'll paint the octopus red*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

Meyers, C. (1999). *Rolling along with Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

Rickert, J. (2001). *Russ and the Almost Perfect Day*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

### **Audio & Video Tapes**

Gould, R. *One of us: Four stories of inclusion*. Boston, MA: Fanlight Productions.

Ohio Dept. of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and Family First. *On this journey together* series includes, *The Early Days, Building Brighter Futures, Parent/Professional Partnerships, and Resources for Families*. Van Nuys, CA: Child Development Media, Inc.

### **Organizations/Hotlines/Web Sites**

American Association on Mental Retardation, 444 N. Capitol St, NW, Ste. 846, Washington, DC 2000-1512, 800-424-3688, [www.aamr.org](http://www.aamr.org)

Arc of the U.S., 1010 Wayne Ave., Ste. 650, Silver Spring, MD 20910, 301-565-3842 [www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org)

Arc of Arizona, Inc., The, 5610 S. Central Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85040, 602-243-1787 or 800-252-9054, [www.arcofarizona.org](http://www.arcofarizona.org)

Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Developmental Disabilities, 1789 W. Jefferson, P. O. Box 6123, Phoenix, AZ 85005-6123, 602-542-0419, [www.de.state.az.us](http://www.de.state.az.us).

Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP), call 800-232-1676 for the closest office

Council for Exceptional Children, The, Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 1110 N. Glebe Rd. Ste. 300, Arlington, VA 22201, 800-232-7733, [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org)

Enhancing Arizona's Parent Networks, [www.ade.state.az.us/ess/eapn](http://www.ade.state.az.us/ess/eapn)

Family Village, [www.familyvillage.wisc.edu](http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu)

Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, 1717 W. Jefferson, Room 112, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 602-542-4049 or 800-889-5893, [www.de.state.az.us/gcdd/index.htm](http://www.de.state.az.us/gcdd/index.htm)

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY), P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013, 800-695-0285, [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)

Parent Information Network, Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, 1535 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 602-364-4015 or 800-352-4558, [www.ade.az.gov/ess/pinspals](http://www.ade.az.gov/ess/pinspals)

Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona, 2600 N. Wyatt, Tucson, AZ 85712, 520-324-3150 or 877-365-7220, [www.pilotparents.org](http://www.pilotparents.org)

Raising Special Kids, 4750 N. Black Canyon Hwy, Ste. 101, Phoenix, AZ 85017, 602-242-4366 or 800-237-3007, [www.raisingpecialkids.org](http://www.raisingpecialkids.org)

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